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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims as follows:

1. (currently amended)      A method of controlling a continuous pickling apparatus wherein a steel strip travels through an acid solution in at least first and second pickling tanks of the continuous pickling apparatus comprising:

calculating a total amount of an acid solution to be supplied to the at least first and second pickling tanks using a predetermined scale thickness, a traveling speed of the steel strip, and a strip width;

providing a predetermined distribution ratio that defines an amount of acid solution to be supplied to each of the first and second tanks relative to the calculated total amount of acid solution, wherein the distribution ratio is selected based on the traveling speed of the steel strip and a predetermined pickling pattern for the steel strip to be pickled; and

controlling the supply of acid solution to the at least first and second tanks by supplying a first amount of acid solution to the first tank and a second amount of acid solution to the second tank, wherein the first and second amounts of acid solution are determined using the calculated total amount of acid solution and the predetermined distribution ratio.

2. (previously presented)      A continuous pickling method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the predetermined distribution ratio of the acid solution supply is selected from a plurality of predetermined distribution ratios.

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3. (previously presented) A continuous pickling method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the value for the scale thickness is selected from a plurality of set values of scale thicknesses which are previously determined based on the steel type of the steel strip.

4. canceled.

5. (currently amended) A method of controlling a continuous pickling apparatus wherein a steel strip travels through an acid solution in at least first and second pickling tanks of the continuous pickling apparatus comprising:

calculating a total amount of an acid solution to be supplied to the at least first and second pickling tanks using a predetermined scale thickness, a traveling speed of the steel strip, and a strip width;

providing a predetermined distribution ratio that defines an amount of acid solution to be supplied to each of the first and second tanks relative to the calculated total amount of acid solution, wherein the distribution ratio is selected based on the traveling speed of the steel strip and a predetermined pickling pattern for the steel strip to be pickled;

controlling the supply of acid solution to the at least first and second tanks by supplying a first amount of acid solution to the first tank and a second amount of acid solution to the second tank, wherein the first and second amounts of acid solution are determined using the calculated total amount of acid solution and the predetermined distribution ratio; and

measuring acid concentration in the first and second tanks;

comparing the measured acid concentration for each of the first and second tanks to a predetermined acid concentration value, and

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adding a correction amount of acid solution to each of the first and second tanks, the correction amount based on a deviation between the measured acid concentration and the predetermined acid concentration.

6. (previously presented) A continuous pickling method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the value for the scale thickness and/or for the predetermined distribution ratio of the acid solution supply is corrected and set based on said deviation between the measured acid concentration and the predetermined acid concentration deviation.

7. (previously presented) A continuous pickling method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the at least first and second pickling tanks include at least a final pickling tank.

8-14. canceled.

15. (previously presented) A continuous pickling method as set forth in claim 5, characterized in that the value for the scale thickness is selected from a plurality of set values of scale thicknesses which are previously determined based on the steel type of the steel strip.

16. canceled.

17. (currently amended) A continuous pickling method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the at least first and second pickling tanks include at least a final pickling tank.

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18-20. canceled.

21. (previously presented) In a method of manufacturing a steel plate, wherein the manufacturing includes the steps of hot working the plate and removing scale produced by the hot working by a pickling step, the improvement comprising using the method of claim 1 for the pickling step.

22. (previously presented) In a method of manufacturing a steel plate, wherein the manufacturing includes the steps of hot working the plate and removing scale produced by the hot working by a pickling step, the improvement comprising using the method of claim 5 for the pickling step.